

And I'm confident that you'll look back and say, "Job well done."

Congratulations to you all. May God bless you, the class of 2006, and may God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:10 a.m. in the Boone Picket Stadium. In his remarks, he referred to David J. Schmidly, president, Oklahoma State University; Gov. Brad Henry of Oklahoma; and Arleen James, mother of 2d Lt. Luke S. James, USA, who was killed in Iraq on January 27, 2004.

Interview With Sabine Christiansen of ARD German Television

May 4, 2006

President's Upcoming Visit to Germany

Ms. Christiansen. Thank you very much, Mr. President, for joining us. We feel very honored by this. Mrs. Merkel invited you to Germany, as we heard, this summer, just before the G-8 summit. And we feel very honored in Germany that you would come and visit us. And as I heard, you're going to visit for the first time the former GDR. Are you looking forward to that?

The President. Yes, I am. It was very kind of Chancellor Merkel—who I call Angela, by the way—to invite me to her residence. It's a gesture of friendship that I appreciate. And Laura and I are looking forward to it. And it will give me a chance to continue our dialog on important issues. I'll get to know her a little better, and she'll know me better. It will make the relationship be stronger over time. So I'm looking forward to it, and I really appreciate it.

German Chancellor Merkel

Ms. Christiansen. Your father helped to make German reunification possible. And Chancellor Merkel told me that you've shown a lot of interest in her life, in her former life in the former GDR. What was the point of interest for you?

The President. Well, last night we were sitting around in the private dining room upstairs here, and I thought it would be interesting for her to describe what it was like to grow up in a Communist world. Laura and I certainly don't know what that's like, nor did Condi Rice or Steve Hadley, the mem-

bers of my team. And I thought it would be good for all of us to hear what it was like.

It was very interesting. She talked about—you know, her dad was a pastor, and she talked about the different pioneer clubs and the schools. It also gave me a chance to get a glimpse into her soul. As I said in the Oval Office yesterday, there's something really refreshing, to work with somebody who understands firsthand what it means to be free. And certainly Angela Merkel has gone from a society which was repressive to a society which is open and free. So I wanted to hear the history, her history, and I also wanted to get a better feel for what she's like and why she thinks the way she thinks.

Germany-U.S. Relations

Ms. Christiansen. That sounds more like a real transatlantic friendship than a partnership—well, with difficulties we had before.

The President. Well, listen, first of all I had a good relationship with Chancellor Schroeder. The problem was, of course, that there was a disagreement over a very difficult decision I had to make, and that was Iraq.

I fully understand why a government or a people would be, you know, I guess, disappointed in me in a way, and not understand why somebody would commit troops to achieve an objective. And I like to remind people that September the 11th, for us, was a change in our history, and it certainly changed the way I thought. And for others, it was just a moment in passing. So there was a disagreement.

On the other hand, U.S.-German relations were always important, and now we have a chance to turn a new chapter in our relationship, strengthen that alliance, strengthen that relationship, and work on matters that will make this world a better place.

So I'm thrilled with my relationship with Chancellor Merkel. She's a really interesting person. She is—first of all, I found her to be confident, not overconfident, but confident in her beliefs, and that's very important—for me, at least—to be dealing with someone who has got strength of character and confident in her capacity to work to make things better.

Iran

Ms. Christiansen. Now there is Iran on the agenda, and there you seem to be a team that plays together, in that. Are you confident after your meeting with Mrs. Merkel that the Europeans and others will support a resolution that might even open the door to sanctions?

The President. Look, first of all, the most important thing in achieving a diplomatic solution—and I want the German people to understand—I want this issue to be solved diplomatically, and I think it can be solved diplomatically. And that the first objective of trying to get different countries to come together in a diplomatic front is to agree that Iran—in this case, Iran—should not have a weapon. And we’ve agreed—Germany, France, the United States, certainly agree with that. But so does Russia; so does China. And that’s a really important part of putting together a coalition of people saying with a universal voice, or unified voice, “no” to Iran.

Ms. Christiansen. Okay. At the——

The President. Well, that’s right.

Secondly, we’re working with our allies to—now that the Iranians, by the way, have basically said, “We don’t care,” what next? And “what next” is to go to the U.N. Security Council. And that’s what we’re working on now. And we’re working on the language of the resolutions and the consequences. And as I told the press yesterday, it’s best not to be describing the negotiations amongst ourselves on TV—simply because the Iranians will be listening to everything we say.

But the point is, is that we want a unified front. Iran must hear that the free world is unified in saying, “No weapon, no knowledge of how to build a weapon, no capacity to make a weapon.” It’s almost a matter of will at this point in time. In other words, they’re watching to see whether or not our coalition will crack, whether or not they can create different factions within our coalition.

And as I’ve described to people here in this country, is that we must not crack. If we want to solve this diplomatically, there must be a common front with a common strategy to achieve the objective.

Diplomatic Negotiations With Iran

Ms. Christiansen. If this doesn’t work with the U.N., you trying to find wide coalition that is going against Iran——

The President. Expand the coalition.

Ms. Christiansen. Exactly. Exactly.

The President. And they’re not mutually exclusive. And first of all, I think we ought to assume it can work in the U.N. We want it to work in the U.N. Therefore, the strategy will be to see to it that it does work in the U.N. And that’s why—you know, I talked to Putin, President Putin the other day, right before Angela came. And she talked to President Putin in Siberia, as you know. And a lot of our conversations obviously revolve around Iran, since this is the most dangerous threat to peace right now.

Ms. Christiansen. And sanctions?

The President. Possibility—absolutely.

Ms. Christiansen. But regarding Russia and China? That will be difficult——

The President. No. It may seem difficult at this point in time, but there’s time. As I explained, again, to people in our country, we’re at the beginning of the diplomatic process, not the end of the diplomatic process. I know—we live in a world where everything has to be solved instantly. I wish problems could be solved instantly, but that’s not how the world works, particularly when you’re dealing with a nontransparent regime.

See, they have an advantage—“they” being the Iranians. They don’t have a press, like the German press and the United States press, that is constantly reporting. They don’t have democracies that are holding leaders to account. They’re nontransparent. So therefore, their negotiating position is much stronger than ours in many ways.

So we must double our efforts, constantly talking to each other, reminding each other about the need to stay unified, and that’s what Angela and I spent a lot of time talking about yesterday.

U.S. Role in Diplomatic Negotiations With Iran

Ms. Christiansen. Why isn’t Washington talking directly to the Iranians?

The President. Well, because it’s much better to have a united front. In other words, we will achieve this diplomatically. If there’s

more than one country involved—we are very much involved. Yesterday we were part of putting down a U.N. Security Council Resolution. The Iranians know we're involved. But what I don't want to have happen is this unified effort fall apart because everybody depends upon one country to solve the problem.

Ms. Christiansen. If all diplomatic efforts fail, what's worse at the end, a nuclear-armed Iran or an American military action?

The President. You're asking me the classic hypothetical question. I believe we can achieve this diplomatically. And that's what I want to do. I want to achieve this diplomatically, because it's—and it's necessary we do so. And an armed Iran will be a threat to peace. It will be a threat to peace in the Middle East; it will create a sense of blackmail; it will encourage other nations to feel like they need to have a nuclear weapon. And so it's essential that we succeed diplomatically.

Israel

Ms. Christiansen. Are you worried that Israel might not try to solve this diplomatically? Because Mr. Olmert already said, "We can defend ourselves."

The President. Well, if I were an Israeli, I'd be concerned about the combination of a President that said, "I want to wipe Israel off the map," and had a nuclear weapon. And so, obviously, Israel is a factor. It's a little country that will defend herself. Again, I keep repeating this, but that's why it's essential we continue to work together, like we're doing now, to convince the Iranians to give up their weapon.

They will be isolated. What they need to understand is that they're going to be isolated from the rest of the world, and that will harm their people, in my judgment. And it's a tough issue, and it's why I ran for office, to solve these problems.

Iraq

Ms. Christiansen. Let's go over to Iraq. Two German hostages who were held in Iraq for months, they just returned home safely, but Iraq remains a major terrorist base. Despite more than, I think, 130,000 U.S. soldiers there, are in the country, what do you

say to the many Europeans who feel the Iraq war has made the world a less safer place?

The President. I would say that they need to look at the facts, that Saddam Hussein was a very dangerous person in the world. Saddam Hussein had used weapons of mass destruction. Obviously, we didn't find them like everybody thought we would, but we did know he had the capacity to make them. He had harbored terrorists. He had invaded his neighborhood. And the removal of Saddam Hussein was the right thing to do.

And now there's a new democracy developing. And the best way to defeat the terrorists in the long run is to defeat their ideology with an ideology based upon liberty. And one of the most amazing events in modern history took place in December of last year, when 12 million Iraqis went to the polls. It's just a—it's a joyous moment for them.

Now what's happened is, is there's a unified government formed. Obviously, it took a little longer than we wanted, but nevertheless they are together. There is a tough Shi'a as the Prime Minister-designate. There's a Sunni rejectionist who is now reconciled with the country. And what you'll see is a democracy that will grow to be an example for others and a country that will deny safe haven to the terrorists.

I disagree with the assessment that there are more terrorists in Iraq now. As a matter of fact, slowly but surely, we're defeating them. But what's important for people in Germany to listen to is what I listen to, which is the voices of an enemy. Zarqawi and Al Qaida has announced that it's just a matter of time for America and the coalition to leave so we can have our safe haven from which to plot and plan further attacks on America and free nations.

And the only way we can lose Iraq is if we lose our nerve, if we retreat, if we pull out before the job is done. And that's not going to happen so long as I'm the President.

Spread of Democracy

Ms. Christiansen. So the development in Iraq, in Palestine, hasn't made you stop halfway, let's say, in the democratization process—

The President. Oh, quite the contrary. I really believe it's necessary to promote democracy. One of the interesting examples in history is, democracies don't fight each other. And Europe today is whole, free, and at peace. You have your disagreements, but those disagreements are not determined on a battlefield anymore.

Japan was a country that my nation fought with, and today, one of my best friends in keeping the peace is the Prime Minister of Japan. What happened between World War II and today is, Japan took on a Japanese-style democracy. What's really interesting is, when you go back and look at some of the writings and musings of people after World War II, there was great criticism about trying to help the Japanese become a Japanese-style democracy: "We can't do that; they're the enemy." Well, today, the enemy is the friend. So I think all the more reason to promote democracy is the elections in Iraq.

I was not pleased that Hamas has refused to announce—its desire to destroy Israel. On the other hand, the elections did say to people in the Palestinian Territories, "We're sick and tired of corruption. We want leaders who don't steal from us. We want leaders who help us educate our children and provide health for our citizens."

And so elections can be good signals of what people are really thinking. I believe that there's still work after elections to be done, but there's no doubt that we've got to spread liberty and freedom if we're going to defeat this ideology that really says, "There should be no rights for women; there should be no religious freedom; and by the way, we'll carry out our foreign policy through acts of violence and murder."

Germany-U.S. Relations/Intelligence

Ms. Christiansen. We Germans seem to be more involved—have been more involved in the Iraq war than anybody else knew—involuntarily, I would like to say. Because the U.S. intelligence services used German airports for secret rendition flights, and interrogated, even, German citizens—hardly what you'd expect, I would say, from a friend and ally.

The President. Well, first of all, on intelligence matters, it's my policy not to talk

about them; otherwise they're not intelligence matters anymore. And the questions you ask will be all—in some cases, analyzed through courts, in some cases through press inquiry. But Germany is a friend.

Ms. Christiansen. But the behavior itself? Is it behavior for an ally—

The President. Well, like, what are you talking about?

Ms. Christiansen. I mean, that you do this, that you don't ask for help for some of the ally, that you don't inform the ally and so on.

The President. On, like, what subject, for example?

Ms. Christiansen. Like these flights, for example.

The President. Well, again, you're asking me to talk about intelligence matters that I'm not going to talk about. And people can say whatever they want to say, but we work closely with Germany on all kinds of fronts in order to protect ourselves.

War on Terror

Ms. Christiansen. Then let me ask you about the image of the United States. Especially for us Germans after the war, the United States stood as the symbol of liberty, for democracy. And then we saw these—we saw Abu Ghraib; we saw Guantanamo; and these seemed, suddenly, to be signals that you're abandoning these values of democracy and liberty. And how do you want to repair them?

The President. Well, first of all, it's absurd to say America is abandoning our values. No question, Abu Ghraib was a disgrace for our country. But I think people ought to take a look at what happened afterwards—and those who are responsible for that disgraceful behavior have been held to account, have been tried, have been, in some cases, dismissed from our military.

We're at war with an enemy. And we've got to protect ourselves. And, obviously, the Guantanamo issue is a sensitive issue for people. I very much would like to end Guantanamo; I very much would like to get people to a court. And we're waiting for our Supreme Court to give us a decision as to whether the people need to have a fair trial in a civilian court or in a military court.

But in either case, they will get a trial, which they, themselves, were unwilling to give to the people that they're willing to kill—"they," the enemy.

And so it's—no, listen, our country is strong on human rights and civil rights. That's why we're leading the case in funding for HIV/AIDS in Africa. That's why we're trying to rally the Nation to do something about Darfur—the genocide in Darfur. That's why we provide food for the hungry. That's why we try to liberate people when we find them in the clutches of tyranny.

Ms. Christiansen. So you said you had to do more?

The President. Yes, we are doing a lot.

Iraq

Ms. Christiansen. I understand, like, \$320 billion that the Iraq war cost—a lot of people are saying—

The President. It's worth it. It's worth it. I wouldn't have spent it if it wasn't worth it. Any time we put a troop in harm's way, they will get support. We're not going—I'm not going to ask a parent—I'm not going to be able to tell a parent, nor will I tell a parent, "Your son who volunteered, or your daughter who volunteered is not going to get the full support of the Federal Government." And so long as we've got people in harm's way, this Government is going to support them.

Dependence on Foreign Sources of Oil/Gasoline

Ms. Christiansen. Let me ask you another question to the war on terrorism. How do you want, really, to fight terrorism when you are so dependent on Arabian oil?

The President. That's an interesting question. I've never thought of it that way. The first thing we ought to do is get off oil.

Ms. Christiansen. That's what you said.

The President. And I mean that. Yes, I know.

Ms. Christiansen. Do you mean that, really?

The President. Absolutely. Oil has become—it's an economic risk for us. I mean, after all, if the oil—if the demand for oil goes up in India or China, fast-growing economies, it affects the price of gasoline in the

United States and in Germany. It's also a national security issue, obviously. Oil comes from unstable parts of the world, so I'm absolutely serious about getting off of oil.

Ms. Christiansen. Because we, in Europe, we asked this when we heard your speech, and we said oil is now—

The President. You don't believe old George W.?

Ms. Christiansen. Gasoline is now, let's say \$70 a barrel. And we said if we look at the United States, your gasoline is still so—I mean, the prices are so low, and we are paying so much money. Why haven't you raise taxes, energy taxes or something, if you really mean it?

The President. Well, because the best way to do it is through technological change. You don't have to tax the working people. And, well, in order—what?

Ms. Christiansen. That's what we do. [Laughter]

The President. Well, we don't. We try not to. Listen, the price of gasoline just went up from \$2.70 to \$3 a gallon, which is about, I guess, 40 percent of what it costs in Germany. And people are screaming, because it's like a tax. And it affects low-income Americans.

And so the best way to solve the problem is to spend money on research and development and come up with alternative ways to drive our automobiles. And we're making interesting progress. We think we're close to a breakthrough, to have a battery in our vehicles that will enable an urban dweller to drive the first 40 miles without using gasoline. So it's that effect of reducing demand for gasoline that will ultimately help our consumers. Obviously, we're trying to do all we can to make sure that supplies of gasoline don't get interrupted in the short term, but in the long term, I can see cars being powered by hydrogen, for example.

Environment/Energy

Ms. Christiansen. Let me ask one more question to that climate topic. After Katrina and after a lot of new evidence of rapid climate change, are you now convinced that this is really a serious problem?

The President. No, I've always said greenhouse gases are a problem. There is an argument there as to whether or not they're naturally made or manmade. And my attitude is, let's just get beyond that argument and do something about it. I believe that we need more nuclear power. If you're really interested in solving greenhouse gas problems, nuclear power is one of the great renewable sources of energy. I know it's controversial.

Ms. Christiansen. Very interesting and controversy debate in Germany as well.

The President. And here in America. But if people are genuinely serious about solving greenhouse gas problems around the world, countries like the United States and India and China ought to be promoting civilian nuclear power.

There's other things we're doing. One, as I just told you, we've got to change our habits when we're driving our cars. One of the real promising areas besides battery research is ethanol research, you know; use corn to be able to fuel automobiles in the United States. Solar energy can work and is becoming more economically feasible. Wind energy is making a marginal difference in the United States but, nevertheless, a difference.

And so my—what I'm saying is, is that we're spending a lot—clean coal technology, for example, we're spending billions of dollars on clean coal technology to figure out how to have zero-emission coal-fired plants. And all this research is going to pay off. And the United States will be able to make sure our economy continues to grow and, at the same time, be good stewards of the environment.

The debate—let me just cut to the chase. I said I didn't support Kyoto—and all of a sudden, everybody said, "Well, George W. Bush doesn't care about clean air"—it's just rubbish. Of course I care about the quality of the air. As a matter of fact, the quality of the air has improved since I've been the President of the United States. But what I didn't want to do is wreck our economy, nor did I think it made sense to sign on to a treaty that didn't include countries like India and China. And so my attitude is, let's get beyond the debate and work in a cooperative fashion to share technologies, to share that which we're researching with each other, and

have a new era of energy that is wise about how we treat the environment too.

Russia-U.S. Relations

Ms. Christiansen. I'm very mindful of our time, but I would like to have a look to the G-8 summit and Russia and about the Russian-American friendship as well. Perhaps another question. You had felt quite warm about President Putin, but there is rising criticism from the Vice President, for example, in the moment, and others, on a lack of democracy in Russia. Have you talked to Putin directly about this? And will you, perhaps, raise any obstacles regarding the G-8?

The President. Yes, of course, I've talked to him—a lot.

Ms. Christiansen. About this problem?

The President. Oh, absolutely. Yes, a lot.

Ms. Christiansen. What does he say?

The President. Well, first let me—let me share how I conduct my relations with people. I like Putin, but that doesn't mean I have to agree with some of the decisions he's made. I know this, that if I stand up and constantly criticize Putin publicly, he's not going to be interested in listening to what I have to say—and neither would I. When somebody feels like they can lecture to me publicly and doesn't do me the courtesy of coming to tell me what's on their mind, one-on-one, then I may not be interested in listening to them—if you know what I mean.

So I'm the kind of person that tries to establish a good personal relationship with somebody, and then we can sit down and talk, and I tell them what's on my mind, and they tell me what's on his. And I have expressed our Nation's concerns about—for example, when they shut down parts of the press corps. I said, "Vladimir, people are wondering why you're making the decision you're making. A free press is an indication of a healthy democracy." And he had an answer.

But, nevertheless, as you know, I'm a religious person, and I believe religious liberty is an important part of a society. And I've got friends in the Catholic Church who asked me to talk to him about Catholic bishops being allowed to move in the country and to practice their faith. And so I bring up all these issues with him.

But there's a difference in scolding somebody to try to gain editorial approval, and somebody who is in a position to be effective. I'd much rather be an effective person than a popular person; let me put it to you that way.

Family Values

Ms. Christiansen. As I said, we're very mindful of your time; it's been a great conversation. If you have 2 minutes—because I would like to have two questions, one on women and one on football. Do you agree to that?

The President. Okay, I will.

Ms. Christiansen. Very short ones. [Laughter] You seemed to get along very well Angela Merkel, a lot of women, strong women around you, here around the Oval Office. We're—have a big debate in Germany about women working and having children and the family. And your wife, for example, you seem to be a very good team in working together—

The President. Thank you.

Ms. Christiansen. And how do you strike this balance?

The President. Yes. First of all, I have been raised by an incredibly strong woman who I love, and that's my mother. And I'm married to an incredibly strong woman who I love, and that's my wife. I hope that Laura and I have raised two incredibly strong women who will have confidence to go out and explore life and to achieve. I don't think that encouraging my daughters to live life to its fullest means that they can't be good mothers at the same time. As a matter of fact, I think a good mother is somebody who is strong in her own right, confident, and independent.

And one of the things I do try to remind people is that the most important responsibility a person can have is to love their child with all their heart. That is by far the most important thing. I'll never forget—I'll give you one quick—we're fine on time. I'll tell you a quick anecdote. One of my dearest friends in political life is Karen Hughes. She was one of the most powerful women ever in the White House, simply because she had complete access to the President and I trusted her. At the same time, by the way, in an

office down the hall was Condoleezza Rice, also a very strong woman who I am very fond of and very close to.

And Karen, one time, came in to see me, and she said, "Mr. President, I'm having trouble at home"—not that she—she wasn't having trouble with her husband or her son—but, "My son is unhappy." And my reaction instantly was, "Karen, do whatever is necessary to make your family happy. That's the most important thing." And so she left, and she went back to Texas, and I missed her dearly. But priorities matter in life, and people are able to set priorities and, at the same time, live life to the fullest.

And Karen is a good example. She got her son squared away; he's now at Stanford University. She's now back in Washington, working with Condi at the State Department. And my only advice is to, one, welcome women in society. I welcome them in the White House. My Presidency is more complete because some of my top advisers are very strong, capable women.

Angela Merkel is somebody who is a joy to deal with. She bring an interesting—

Ms. Christiansen. Why?

The President. Well, because she's got a straightforward manner about herself that is—when she says something, you know she means it. She is what she is. She's not a fake. And when I sit there talking to Angela, I'm not saying I'm talking to—I don't think gender; I think strength of character. I think reliability. I think clear-headed thinking. I think of a fellow strategist as to how to solve problems.

So, anyway, that's a long answer to a short question.

2006 World Cup

Ms. Christiansen. I think for the two of us, we don't have soccer expert teams sitting here together, but anyway, I think you're a baseball fan—

The President. I am a baseball fan—you're right.

Ms. Christiansen. You are. Do you think you've turned a little bit into a soccer fan? I mean, your team is doing so well at the moment and—

The President. That's what they tell me. I do know a little bit about the World Cup

because I read a very interesting article about the German coach—and evidently he’s a dynamic—you know, he’s spending some time in California. And the World Cup is such a huge event that I think most Americans like me, who weren’t raised on soccer, are beginning to pay attention to it. Now, I know that sounds like heresy in Germany.

Ms. Christiansen. In Germany, yes. But think of just—I mean, that the American team could meet the Iranian team.

The President. Yes, could be.

Ms. Christiansen. What then?

The President. Well, I don’t view it that way. I view it as, I hope the American team does well. But this is a big event for Germany, and Germany will be a great host for the games. And obviously, I hope the American team does well—they’re supposedly a good team.

Ms. Christiansen. If they get world champion, you’re coming for the final game?

The President. I don’t know—do you think I possibly would be invited? I don’t know.

Ms. Christiansen. We’re very happy that you come over in July.

The President. I’m looking forward it, and I want to thank you for this good interview.

NOTE: The interview was taped at 1:21 p.m. in the Diplomatic Reception Room at the White House for later broadcast. In his remarks, the President referred to Chancellor Angela Merkel and former Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder of Germany; President Vladimir Putin of Russia; President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad of Iran; former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; Prime Minister-designate Jawad al-Maliki, and Speaker of Parliament Mahmoud al-Mashhadani of Iraq; senior Al Qaida associate Abu Musab Al Zarqawi; Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi of Japan; and Jurgen Klinsmann, head coach, Germany’s 2006 World Cup men’s soccer team. The interviewer referred to Prime Minister Ehud Olmert of Israel. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 7. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this interview.

Interview With Kai Diekmann of Bild May 5, 2006

The President. Have you ever been in the Oval Office before?

Mr. Diekmann. Once, a long time ago—

The President. I’ll give you a quick tour before our interview. So, the first thing that a President does, which I didn’t realize, was pick a rug. I’ve have no idea about rugs. And so in this job, you’ve got to delegate. The American President is in a position where there’s just unbelievable complexities to the job—Darfur, Iran—a whole lot of issues. So I delegated the decision about the rug to my wife.

The second thing a President has got to do is have a strategic mind. In order to be successful, in my judgment, as the President, you’ve got to constantly think strategically. And so I said to her, “You pick out the colors; you be the tactical person; but I want it to say, ‘optimistic person.’ ” That’s all I wanted it to say. Here is the result. Isn’t it beautiful?

Mr. Diekmann. Yes, it is very beautiful.

The President. There’s a sense of optimism when you come in here. And there’s a reason why. You cannot lead people unless you’re optimistic about what you’re doing. You’ve got to believe it in your very soul. One of the interesting things about the Presidency is, people watch me like a hawk. They’re looking at my moves. And if I’m going to be wringing my hands and if I’m all worried about the decisions I make—are not going to lead to a better tomorrow, they’ll figure it out.

And so when you talk to me today, I just want you to know, I not only strongly believe in the decisions I make, I’m optimistic that they’re going to work—very optimistic.

These are all Texas paintings. That’s west Texas; those are other Texas paintings. At least if you’re a Texan, it reflects a way of life and a way of thinking. The interesting thing about Washington is that they want me to change—“they” being the—and I’m not changing, you know. You can’t make decisions if you don’t know who you are and you flip around with the politics. You’ve got to stay strong in what you believe and optimistic about that—you’ll get good results.

And so—the other thing I want you to know about me is that no matter how pressurized it may seem, I’m not changing what I believe. Now, I may change tactics, but I’m not going to change my core beliefs—a belief